

**REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN UNECE REGION
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OPENING STATEMENT

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**Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants and
Colleagues,**

**It is a pleasure to participate in this Regional Forum on Sustainable
Development for the region, and I am honoured to open it together
with the UN Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary of
the UNECE, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and
Social Affairs, and, of course, the youth representatives who
energized us with their enthusiasm and ideas, and who reminded us
that this is our work, our responsibility, and their future.**

In 2015 and 2016, the world agreed on a number of highly ambitious global agendas – to sustain the development gains, to accelerate progress in reaching what we did not achieve, and to address risks, the impact of which could be irreversible.

With this unprecedented unity in the world’s intent, where does our region find itself today?

- **Although economic growth is already accelerating, the balance of risks in the region remains tilted to the downside.**
- **This, in turn, leads to weakened and less accessible social services and protection.**
- **Challenges are deepened by worsening environmental and climatic conditions. WHO estimates that 1.4 million deaths in the region are caused by environmental factors that could be avoided.**

Refugees and migrants seeking safety from war, violence and human rights violations; re-emerging political tensions and protracted conflicts; the intensification of violent extremism; still persisting gender inequalities – these are just a few to cite in addition. Notwithstanding many important results we achieved during the MDGs era, our region is still facing many challenges.

At this juncture, the Agenda 2030 offers a powerful platform to tackle these challenges in an integrated manner.

All the countries in the region embraced the new agenda and swiftly move ahead with SDG nationalization.

What is the UN's offer on the ground?

- The UN development system is working through the MAPS framework. MAPS stands for Mainstreaming, Acceleration**

and Policy Support and guides the work of each UN entity present at the global, regional or country level.

- **The support at the regional level expands from contextualization of the SDGs, to their mainstreaming into national strategies and localization. To facilitate this, the UN is undertaking MAPS Missions in programme countries, which are designed to support UNCTs on the ground and governments in SDG integration, and identify accelerators to help achieve SDGs.**

- **Many countries are interested in support to build capacity for data collection and analysis. We are joining forces in statistical capacity building.**

- **Lastly, support in SDG implementation is provided through UN's joint programmatic frameworks – called UNDAFs. These**

frameworks integrate the SDGs and embrace the support that the UN is providing to national partners.

The UN at each level, with its diversity of mandates and wealth of expertise, looks forward to working with all the Member States. We will focus our efforts on targeting the most vulnerable.

Let me leave you with five key messages:

- **The Agenda 2030 is not an add-on – to avoid multiplicity of in-parallel running agendas, we need to integrate the SDGs into national planning, implementation, and monitoring.**
- **We need to reverse the trend of growing inequalities. For this, a country-specific mix of policies is required to target all and, in particular, those having the least and needing the most.**
- **Gender equality and human rights should underpin all our actions under the Agenda 2030.**

- **Across all levels of policymaking, efforts in pursuit of sustainable development require good governance, focusing on accountability, transparency and participation.**
- **We need to document lessons learnt and share experiences along the way.**
- **And last but not least – comprehensive measurement and data disaggregation are indispensable in ensuring no one is left behind.**

Thanks to the far-reaching global agreements, there are good roadmaps for inclusive sustainable development. The alternative is a world characterised by even more turmoil and instability than the one we witness today. That is avoidable. But it is imperative to build support for the achievement of the SDGs to make our world a better place to live for all people.

Thank you.